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Mr Neil Cappleman
Headteacher
Flockton Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School
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Dear Mr Cappleman

Short inspection of Flockton Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Following my visit to the school on 3 February 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In response to significant changes in staffing, you have extended the senior leadership team so that more staff share responsibilities in moving the school forward. This way of working reflects the school's collaborative ethos where staff, parents, governors and the church community work together in the best interests of the pupils. Pupils described the school as a large family whose members take care of one another, and this view was echoed by parents.

You have taken effective steps to make the improvements identified at the last inspection. Subject leaders for English and mathematics now monitor and evaluate the quality of provision regularly so that they are better placed to lead improvements and contribute to the school's self-evaluation. They are held to account rigorously by governors. Overall, progress in writing is good, although this varies year on year, given the small numbers in each cohort. Pupils have a good range of opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects. For example, as part of a wider topic, older pupils wrote at length and to a good standard about a local mining disaster. Teachers have the same high expectations of pupils' writing across all subjects. You and your staff are grappling with a new system for assessment without levels to meet national requirements. The basis for this is in place, but you acknowledge that further refinement is needed to make this manageable and to ensure that challenging targets are set for all pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and staff training is up to date. Some senior staff and governors are trained in the application of safer recruitment procedures. However, not all the current information about these safeguarding policies, and several others, is available on the school's website. This does not, however, hinder you in keeping pupils safe. You and your staff know all the pupils well and are alert to any risks to their well-being. You liaise effectively with other agencies, when required, to ensure that pupils are kept safe, and maintain appropriately detailed records of any actions taken. Pupils understand how to stay safe in school and follow the good routines, for instance at breaktimes, that ensure that an adult is always on hand to help. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that, should they have any concerns, there is an adult in school whom they can turn to. Pupils say bullying is rare and that any incidents are handled effectively by staff.

Inspection findings

- You, your staff, governors, pupils and parents are rightly proud of the caring ethos, rooted in Christianity, which characterises the school. All involved in school life show respect for one another, and in this positive environment, pupils behave very well and develop very positive attitudes towards learning. This is evident in the pride they take in the presentation of their work. Pupils enjoy the recognition they gain for good work or behaviour in the weekly achievement assemblies and relish the opportunity to take the class bear home for the weekend! Pupils are confident that their views are taken seriously and this helps them grow into mature, articulate young people. They take their responsibilities, for instance as assembly helpers or librarians, seriously. The school council, elected democratically and facilitated by a governor, makes decisions such as which charities to support and how best to raise funds. Councillors are proud of the part they played recently in the appointment of a new member of staff.
- You are harnessing pupils' positive attitudes to learning effectively through the curriculum. You reviewed this in the light of the new National Curriculum and developed an approach that uses a topic or book as the focus for learning. Pupils are enthused by this and by the visits, such as to a mining museum, that enrich their understanding and capture their imaginations. These first-hand experiences stimulate pupils' learning and help to develop their oracy and writing skills. You are also developing outdoor learning for all ages so, for example, we observed pupils in Years 4 and 5 learning about place value using practical equipment in the playground. You recognise that learning in this way needs further development to ensure that all pupils are challenged sufficiently by such activities. Extra-curricular clubs provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to extend their experiences and skills. Pupils spoke warmly about the opportunities they have, among others, to sing, knit, cook and play sport.

- Children make a rapid start to their learning when they join the Reception class. At that point, their skills and understanding are broadly typical for their age, but by the end of the Reception Year the proportion who reach a good level of development is above average. This strong start is built on effectively at Key Stage 1, with the most-able pupils reaching the higher Level 3 by the end of Year 2. Although the results of the Year 1 screening for phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make) have fluctuated from cohort to cohort, pupils' performance in reading is strong throughout the school. Their writing also shows a good grasp of phonics, with logical attempts to spell unfamiliar words. The school's assessment information shows that, overall, pupils make good progress and are well prepared for their move to middle school.
- The governing body, reconstituted fairly recently, is well organised to play its strategic part in the leadership of the school. Governors have a good grasp of their role, in part because they attend pertinent training, and are highly committed to fulfilling this as well as possible. A culture of openness ensures that governors are well informed by the headteacher and staff. Governors have specific links to aspects of the school's work or subjects such as English, and meet regularly with staff who lead on these areas. For example, a governor keeps track of the impact on pupils' learning of support funded by the pupil premium (additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority).

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's website meets statutory requirements and is kept up to date
- the outdoor elements of the curriculum are developed effectively so that they both tap into pupils' enthusiasm and challenge them rigorously to do as well as they can
- they embed a manageable assessment system that enables teachers accurately to track pupils' progress and set ambitious targets for their achievement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director for Children and Young People for Kirklees Metropolitan Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, members of the senior leadership team, teachers and governors including the Chair of the Governing Body. I met the school council, whose members told me about the part they play in school life, and talked informally with other pupils and with parents about what it is like to be a member of the school community. The school's self-evaluation and development plan were considered, together with safeguarding documentation, assessment information and policies posted on the school's website. Alongside you, I visited each class to observe teaching and learning, and to consider the progress made by pupils through scrutiny of work in their books. The responses to Ofsted's parental questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. Prior to the inspection, there were six responses on Parent View. By the end of the inspection, there were 15 responses including five comments which were overwhelmingly positive.